

# Recruiting and Retaining Youth Participants

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Sometimes you may be facilitating the *Roadmap* with a group of youth who have been pre-selected. However, sometimes you may have to recruit your participants. This largely depends on who your youth partner is and when facilitation is scheduled. For instance, if you are partnering with a school to facilitate the curriculum during a class, then your participants will already be selected. However, if you are partnering with a school but are facilitating the curriculum as an independent after-school activity, then you will probably need to recruit all of your participants.

Retaining participants throughout the process can be a challenge, particularly with busy youth who have many interests competing for their time. If your participants are pre-selected, they may not have a choice about their participation. For those youth, the question of retaining them is not about keeping them physically present but keeping them engaged in the process. Even if youth can choose to not be physically present, the underlying issue is about keeping them engaged.

## Tips for Recruitment

- ⇒ Generate enthusiasm from the beginning. CE should be a fun process, and the first impression youth get of CE should reflect that.
- ⇒ Think of recruitment as an advertising campaign. How creative can you get with ways to recruit participants?
- ⇒ Consider having youth "apply" to participate. This can be a useful tool for generating enthusiasm. Although you will probably accept almost everyone who applies, youth will be more likely to buy into the process if they have had to think about why they want to be there. It will also give facilitators a better idea of who the youth are and where they're coming from (e.g. how engaged in community activity they already are, what they think about civic involvement, why they want to participate).
- ⇒ Consider having an informational meeting for interested youth about the CE process. Be enthusiastic and use the time to answer any questions they have about what the process will look like. Since youth will get a better idea of what to expect from the process, they are more likely to be truly interested when they sign up, which may help increase retention later.

## Tips for Retention

- ⇒ Consider having incentives for active participation. Some incentives could be large and come after successful completion of Unit 7. The celebration at the end of Unit 7 could be used as such an incentive, particularly if members plan a fun activity and have a minimum level of involvement required to attend. Past members have also arranged for participants to receive extra credit at school, usually in civics or social studies classes. Smaller incentives can also be used, such as offering small rewards (e.g. stickers, pens or pencils, other small items) throughout facilitation for active participation and good behavior.
- ⇒ Be flexible when facilitating. Adjust your facilitation to suit the needs of your youth. If you know that certain activities in the *Roadmap* will not work well with a specific youth group, plan an alternative activity that meets the same goals. (Remember that all alternative activities must be approved by WSC Program Coordinators prior to use. Plan ahead to make sure that you have adequate time to receive approval.)